Mr. David Ignatius
The Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20071

3/11/90

Dear Mr. Ignatius,

There is a very good sentence in your today's interesting and informative "Fishing for Good Ideas" article in which I see meaning you perhaps did not intend: "The challenge for editors seems less in finding new ideas than in devising new ways to express the same old ones; finding fresh perspective or new information that casts light on a familiar problem."

As foreign editor, a job in which I wish you well and offer my sympathies in advance, you will have few if any more irreconcilable matters to deal with than Israel. I hope you can find and give it a dimension that is quite real and I do not recall ever seeing treated in any way in the Post or the major media.

Lawrence Meyer's article crawls after the same red fire-engine. It does anything but give a "fresh perspective or new information..." (I know you did not edit this Outlook and I'm not questioning anybody right to reiterate and reiterate or be a propagandist or espouse a point of view.) With all that length, experienced reporter that he is, he still manages to avoid any real context or perspective. He argues, which is also his right, but he does not report anything new. He also does not report what is there to be reported but does not conform to his preconception.

Sure if he lived there he is an expert but what is there in his article that was not in the paper often enough in the not distant past? and in considering an editor's at least theoretical responsibilities, where is there, here or in the past in the Post, any other side?

Meyer devotes less than a sentence to ~~the thoughts~~ Israel's need "of reasonable guarantees that" its "security will be safeguarded" but having said this, without which he'd be more subject to criticism, he says nothing more. Not a word about how Israel's security can or will be safeguarded or how or by whom. Or even whether any agreement with the Arafats could give Israel security with some 20 Muslim states ina state of war with it for longer than most of the world's population has been alive.

I hope the Post gives you time to cram for your new responsibilities and I hope, too, that you will seek to get a better understanding of the realities in that terribly troubled part of the troubled world. If you would like to then I recommend the last chapter of the non-Jewish British historian, Paul Johnson's, "History of the Jews." Not that I don't recommend more for I do believe knowldge of the entire book will give you more understanding and perspective. But the last chapter covers the most recent period and is particularly good on what everyone seems to be hung up on, negotiations. There is a significant history to negotiations going back to 1937 that I avoid condensing or interpreting for ~~my~~ you. The book is available as a quality paperback.

While I'm on the subject, don't you believe the head, which says that the Russian Jews are the "last tribe out of bandage," ~~which~~ this is faithful to Meron Benvenisti's piece but not to fact. His gimmick does make it seem to an editor that he had something new to say. If and when every Jew is out of Russia there will remain the "last tribe" of Jews marooned ~~in~~ throughout the Muslim world. There are many.

The simply awful situation in that part of the world is immensely more complicated and confused than it appears to be. I do hope that in the future what I see in the Post is less one-sided and two-dimensional when the article pretends to report the actualities and is presented as other than arguing a point of view.

Good luck!

Harold Weisberg

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